

VZCZCXYZ0290
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLP #1261/01 1562218
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 042218Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7637
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 8011
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 5356
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 9295
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 6519
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3641
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 3911
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 4064
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5515
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6265
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0965
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 1174
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001261

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/04/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [EINV](#) [EAID](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: GOVERNMENT LOSING INFLUENCE

REF: A. LA PAZ 1258
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 1244
[1](#)C. LA PAZ 1243
[1](#)D. LA PAZ 1189
[1](#)E. LA PAZ 1150

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4b,d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Less than two weeks after President Evo Morales had to cancel his visit the constitutional capital of Sucre because of violent protests, it appears that Evo and his ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party are losing control of sectors that used to be considered strongly pro-MAS. While people muddle through everyday life almost as normal--accustomed to Bolivia's recent tradition of weak governments--groups with local power are prevailing against military and police authority as the government backs down to avoid bloodshed. Although Evo is also alienating neighbors, the main target of Evo and the MAS continues to be the United States. End summary.

- - - - -
Might Makes Right: Evo's Grip Slips
- - - - -

[1](#)2. (C) Basic central government control over the functioning of the country is increasingly problematic. Transport workers on June 4 paralyzed almost all of the interior of the country with road blockades, protesting road conditions and taxes. While in recent weeks a number of incidents in opposition-controlled areas have highlighted the regionality of MAS control. On May 24 despite the initial presence of police, military and pro-government social groups, Evo was forced by protesters to cancel his visit to the constitutional capital of Sucre. The same day, Presidency Minister Juan Ramon Quintana was not able to visit opposition-controlled Pando, where there had been protests against a vice-presidential visit a week earlier. On April 5 Evo was only able to visit the outskirts of Tarija because of threats of confrontations, and his earlier visits to Santa Cruz were limited to MAS-controlled areas. In late May, Evo was forced to turn back from several attempted visits to Beni, where he was attempting to deliver aid.

- - - - -
An Anarchy of Autonomies

- - - - -

¶3. (C) Evo and the MAS's lack of influence in opposition-controlled areas is less surprising than recent events which have shown that the central government is also losing control among groups that used to be considered MAS stalwarts. On June 3, residents of the border town of Desaguadero (in MAS-stronghold La Paz department, on the border with Peru) joined their Mayor in attacking Minister of Defense Walker San Miguel, driving the minister and his military guards out of town and then burning the customs office. Desaguadero Mayor Espiridion Mamani said, "The military showed up without prior coordination. This is an autonomous municipal government...we will not allow the military to be watching over the lake (Titicaca); we deserve respect." (Note: The military went to Desaguadero to crack down on smuggling, a serious problem at this border crossing. End note.)

¶4. (C) On the same day, indigenous communities in Chuquisaca and Potosi announced their intent to reestablish the nation of Qhara Qhara (which straddled the two departments in pre-Inca times), declaring their autonomy and their goal of separating from Bolivia. According to local indigenous leader Gab